

The New Methodist Empire

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The New Methodist Empire

THIS Empire is rising in the heart of the United States, and is composed of the Commonwealths of Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas; an Empire that has arisen from the earth within the forty years just past and is still growing at a marvelous rate. Only a half century and the greater portion of this region was known as a waste, barren, arid, desert, with little promise of the future; given to fitful moods of heat and wind, droughts and cyclones, grasshoppers and chinch bugs and other pests. Can any good thing come out of the trans-Missouri region? was a question too often answered in the negative. Yet some venturesome, heroic souls came, saw, and conquered, while many more not so heroic, came, saw, and retreated to their former homes, and for a time it seemed likely that the Indian and the buffalo would hold undisputed sway and the millions of acres remain undisturbed by the plodding plowman. Yet to-day what see we? Happy, prosperous citizens, peaceful homes, commerce and railroads, churches and colleges, prairies yielding their increase, mountain and valley flowing with nature's bounty.

Outlook

Here lies Missouri with her large cities, her farms, her commerce, her mines; Kansas with her wheat and corn, her coal, gas and oil; Colorado with her silver and gold, her untold undeveloped regions beyond the Rockies; Texas with her Panhandle and State plain, her mighty stretch of virgin prairie, sufficient if all were tilled to feed the Nation; Oklahoma where yet for awhile the pathetic condition of the red man is seen with his fast fading power, and where the white man with his energy and enterprise is making a State worthy of a place among the States of the Union; and Arkansas with her Ozarks, her salubrious, climatic fruit.

Achievement

This is where the new Methodist Empire is building, for not only has the capitalist, the agriculturist, the mining and civil engineer and prospector been busy, but the Methodist pioneer preacher, layman, missionary, educator and church builder have been busy also, and to-day through their labors we count 300,000 members; 225,000 Sunday-school scholars; 2,246 churches valued at \$6,320,214; 1,036 parsonages valued at \$1,176,911; and these churches have given in the last year more than \$300,000 to the benevolent causes of our Church, not including many missions not tabulated which are doing fine work for God. This great constituency is very largely the result of the encouragement given by domestic missionary appropriations and the donations and loans by the Board of Church Extension, without which many a preacher could not have stayed, and many a church could not have been erected. Has it not been worth while? Remember this, too: that that which is here tabulated is, after all, the smallest of the victories. Think of the home life kept pure, the sorrowing hearts comforted, the souls converted, the children trained, spiritual life sustained, the moral sentiment inculcated, giving "permanence to order, value to property, dignity to law, lifting the fallen, educating the ignorant, feeding the hungry," relieving the sufferer. These higher values cannot be put down in dollar and cent marks or enumerated, but are after all a product of the pulpit of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Work Yet to Do

It will be asked: "Is there further need of Home Missionary and Church Extension help in these regions?" Most assuredly. The incoming populations require the aid of the organizing preacher and the church builder. The city, the mining camp and the country places will require this until an organization can be effected, a church built and made self-supporting.

To-day new regions are being developed. Colorado with her Government irrigation plants and her railroads; Western Kansas and Northwest Texas with their "dry farming" in some places—in others by irrigation from artesian wells, are causing a great rush of "home-seekers" every week on the excursion trains that are run by the railroads. Oklahoma, that has amazed every onlooker by her prodigious growth and prosperity, continues to be the place where the emigrant in large numbers makes his goal. Eastern Oklahoma, now Indian Territory, opening for settlement, the disabilities of the Indian being removed, so that he can sell his lands to the white man, has its full share of new people.

Southeastern Kansas and Southwestern Missouri with their coal and zinc mining interests, are drawing large numbers of foreigners and need care in home missionary work. These all are making tremendous demands on the resources of "The Board of Home Missions and Church Extension" for the taking care of the spiritual interests and the morals of these Commonwealths.

We have not spoken of the German, the Swedish, and the Bohemian work that is being supported also from this fund, and is most encouraging.

Returns

We are confident there is no portion of the United States that will show a quicker or larger return than this same new Methodist Empire (indeed that is now being demonstrated in the figures above given). This return will increase in larger ratio as the years go on in contributions to the benevolent causes of our Church, in the building up of civic righteousness and Protestantism, and in bringing "AMERICA TO CHRIST," thus promoting the amelioration of the human race and bringing the whole world to Christ.

HENRY J. COKER.